

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 RANGOO 00879 01 OF 02 041155Z

50

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PM-03 L-02 IO-10 EB-07

MMS-04 SIG-02 CU-04 INR-07 AID-05 AGR-10 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PC-05 TRSE-00 USIA-15

LAB-04 SIL-01 PRS-01 /114 W
----- 112234

R 040930Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9403

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 0879

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR BM US

SUBJ: FY 1976 PARA-BURMA: RATIONALE FOR ASSIGNING PRIORITIES TO
COURSES OF ACTION

1. IN THE COURSE OF A RECENT VISIT TO RANGOON, A RESPONSIBLE DESK OFFICER ASKED US TO EXPLAIN HOW AND WHY PRIORITIES WERE ASSIGNED TO COURSES OF ACTION IN OUR DRAFT FY 1976 PARA.

2. THE UTILITY OF PRIORITIES IN A RESOURCE-ALLOCATION DOCUMENT SHOULD BE EVIDENT, IF IT IS ACCEPTED THAT: (A) RESOURCES ARE LIMITED; (B) CONFLICT OR COMPETITION BETWEEN COURSES OF ACTION IS POSSIBLE; AND (C) THE ASSIGNMENT OF MEANINGFUL PRIORITIES IS FEASIBLE.

3. PRIORITIES ARE ALSO USEFUL FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN THOSE SUGGESTED BY A NARROW INTERPRETATION OF "RESOURCE-ALLOCATION". A PROPERLY DEVELOPED SYSTEM OF PRIORITIES COULD EVEN, FOR EXAMPLE, ASSIST IN THE FORMULATION OF A "KEY QUESTION LIST" FOR THE USE OF EMBASSY ANALYSTS, OR, AT A SOMEWHAT MORE ADVANCED LEVEL, PROVIDE PART OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR A SYSTEMATIC PREDICTION MODEL. HOWEVER, THE MORE IMMEDIATE UTILITY OF A PROPERLY-DEVELOPED SET OF PRIORITIES WOULD BE IN ASSISTING MANAGEMENT TO PLAN THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES, INCLUDING STAFF. THE EFFORT TO DEVELOP PRIORITIES

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 RANGOO 00879 01 OF 02 041155Z

IS ALSO, PART FROM ITS ULTIMATE PRACTICAL UTILITY, A WORTHWHILE

STIMULUS TO CONCEPTUALIZATION.

4. THE QUESTION WHETHER ASSIGNMENT OF MEANINGFUL PRIORITIES IS FEASIBLE IS A VALID ONE, BUT IT NEEDS DEFINITION. INASMUCH AS RESOURCES ARE A L R E A D Y BEING ALLOCATED, WITH A CERTAIN SCALE OF PRIORITIES A L R E A D Y IMPLICIT IN THE PROCESS, WE BELIEVE THE QUESTION MIGHT BE REPHRASED LIKE THIS:

"IS IT FEASIBLE TO ASSIGN NUMERICAL VALUES TO ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION, REPRESENTING WHAT THEY ARE WORTH IN TERMS OF U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST, SUCH THAT THEY MIGHT BE USED IN CALCULATING LOGICALLY DEFENSIBLE (NOT NECESSARILY PREFERABLE) ALTERNATIVES TO THE EXISTING PATTERN OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION?"

5. THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH PRIORITIES MIGHT BE DERIVED OR CALCULATED. OUR METHOD STARTED FROM THE CONCEPT THAT THE "WORTH" TO THE UNITED STATES OF ONE COURSE OF ACTION AS COMPARED WITH ANOTHER DEPENDS ON THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TWO COURSES OF ACTION AS ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOME PURPOSE OR PURPOSES. IF COURSE A IS TWICE AS EFFECTIVE AS COURSE B, AND ONLY ONE PURPOSE IS INVOLVED, COURSE A IS WORTH TWICE AS MUCH. (THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT COURSE A IS THEREFORE ALWAYS TO BE PREFERRED; IF IT COSTS THREE TIMES AS MUCH AS B, THEN B IS THE BEST BARGAIN).

6. COMPLEXITIES ARISE BECAUSE, EVEN IN BURMA, THE UNITED STATES HAS MORE THAN ONE PURPOSE, NOT ALL OF WHICH ARE WORTH THE SAME IN TERMS OF THE U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST, AND BECAUSE ONE COURSE OF ACTION MAY SIMULTANEOUSLY SERVE THE ADVANCEMENT OF TWO OR MORE PURPOSES. ALSO, THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY COURSE OF ACTION MAY DIFFER WITH RESPECT TO THE VARIOUS PURPOSES WHOSE ADVANCEMENT IT SERVES. ACCORDINGLY, THE PRIORITY WEIGHT ASSIGNED TO EACH COURSE OF ACTION IN OUR PARA WAS A COMPOSITE REFLECTING ITS RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS WITH RESPECT TO EACH RELEVANT PURPOSE, WITH EACH PURPOSE WEIGHTED ACCORDING TO ITS RELATIVE VALUE TO THE UNITED STATES.

COMMENT: THE SITUATION WAS ACTUALLY MORE COMPLEX THAN INDICATED HERE (OR THAN REALLY NECESSARY) BECAUSE OF THE PARA STRUCTURE'S UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 RANGOO 00879 01 OF 02 041155Z

AMBIGUITY WITH REGARD TO NATIONAL INTERESTS AND WHAT IT CALLS "POLICIES." IN OUR CALCULATIONS, WE TREATED THE "POLICIES" AS ULTIMATE PURPOSES, THOUGH WE MIGHT WELL HAVE STARTED WITH THE TABLE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS, AS SURVEYED IN SECTION I. OSBORN

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 RANGOO 00879 02 OF 02 041159Z

50

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PM-03 L-02 IO-10 EB-07

MMS-04 SIG-02 CU-04 INR-07 AID-05 AGR-10 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PC-05 TRSE-00 USIA-15

LAB-04 SIL-01 PRS-01 /114 W
----- 112354

R 040930Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9404

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 RANGOON 0879

7. AS TO TECHNIQUE, WE CONSTRUCTED A MATRIX, WITH "POLICIES" LISTED DOWN THE LEFT-HAND MARGIN AND "COURSES OF ACTION" ACROSS THE TOP. HAVING WEIGHTED (BY A SIMPLE PROCESS OF RELATIVE ORDERING) EACH "POLICY" TO EXPRESS THE RELATIVE VALUE OF THE BENEFIT THAT WOULD ACCRUE TO THE UNITED STATES FROM A PLAUSIBLE DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN THE POLICY'S IMPLEMENTATION, WE DISAGGREGATED, OR "SPREAD", THE WEIGHT HORIZONTALLY ACROSS THE MATRIX, ENTERING IN EACH COURSE-OF-ACTION COLUMN A SHARE OF THE WEIGHT PROPORTIONATE TO THE ESTIMATED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COURSE OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO THE POLICY CONCERNED. COURSE-OF-ACTION PRIORITY WEIGHTS WERE THEN CALCULATED BY SUMMING THE COLUMNS. RANK-ORDER PRIORITIES BEING MORE FAMILIAR TO MOST LAYMEN, WE ALSO ASSIGNED EACH COURSE OF ACTION A RANK ORDER STARTING WITH "1" FOR THE LARGEST WEIGHT AND SO ON.

COMMENT: RELATIVE ORDERING IS A PROCESS IN WHICH THE SMALLEST ITEM IS ASSIGNED A VALUE SUCH AS 10 AND OTHER ITEMS ARE ASSIGNED VALUES EXPRESSING A JUDGMENT AS TO HOW MUCH LARGER THEY ARE THAN THE SMALLEST ITEM. THIS PROCESS WAS ALSO USED IN RATING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COURSES OF ACTION; THE VALUES THUS ASSIGNED TO EACH COURSE OF ACTION WERE CONVERTED TO PERCENTS AND MULTIPLIED BY THE "POLICY" WEIGHTS TO DISAGGREGATE THE LATTER AMONG THE VARIOUS COURSES OF ACTION.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 RANGOO 00879 02 OF 02 041159Z

8. AS TO THE VALIDITY OF THE PRIORITIES ASSIGNED, WE NOTED IN TRANSMITTING OUR PARA DRAFT THAT "INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS BY SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM REFLECTED A STRIKING DEGREE OF CONSENSUS..." SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM, RATHER THAN USING SYSTEMATIC METHODOLOGY LIKE THAT DESCRIBED ABOVE, ASSIGNED PRIORITIES TO THE COURSES OF ACTION DIRECTLY BY SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENT; THEIR RANK-ORDER PRIORITIES CORRELATED WELL WITH THOSE DERIVED BY THE MORE ANALYTICAL METHOD.

9. ONE MORE ACCURATE WAY OF TESTING THE VALIDITY OF OUR PRIORITIES WOULD BE TO DISAGGREGATE THE COURSE-OF-ACTION WEIGHTS, AS STATED IN THE PARA DRAFT, AMONG THE VARIOUS FACTORS (INCLUDING EMBASSY COMPONENTS) IDENTIFIED UNDER EACH COURSE OF ACTION AS "RESOURCES", ACCORDING TO THE ESTIMATED RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EACH FACTOR, AND THEN COMPARE THE VALUE ACCRUING TO EACH OF THE VARIOUS EMBASSY COMPONENTS WITH THAT COMPONENT'S ACTUAL SHARE OF THE EMBASSY'S STAFF AND OTHER RESOURCES. WE HAVE NOT GONE THROUGH THIS EXERCISE FORMALLY AT THE COUNTRY TEAM LEVEL; BUT THE VERY TENTATIVE CUTS WE HAVE TAKEN AT IT SUGGEST THAT THE RESULTS COULD, IN THE TERMS OF PARAGRAPH 4 ABOVE, BE USED AS A BASIS FOR CALCULATING A LOGICALLY DEFENSIBLE -- THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY PREFERABLE--ALTERNATIVE TO THE EXISTING PATTERN OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION. IF THE DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE US TO RUN THE EXERCISE MORE FORMALLY, WE WOULD BE GLAD TO OBLIGE.

10. THE ABOVE EXPLANATIONS ARE OF NECESSITY RATHER FORESHORTENED. IF ANY OF THE POINTS ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, WE WOULD WELCOME A CHANCE TO ELABORATE.
OSBORN

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARA, INTERAGENCY COMMITTEES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975RANGOO00879
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750117-0193
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750480/aaaacvkz.tel
Line Count: 201
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 JUN 2003 by maginmm>; APPROVED <12 JAN 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FY 1976 PARA-BURMA: RATIONALE FOR ASSIGNING PRIORITIES TO COURSES OF ACTION
TAGS: PFOR, BM, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006